

# Market News

Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Recycling Market Development Program

## Texas Compost Summit Explores Markets

TNRCC and the national Composting Council co-sponsored the first Texas Compost Summit in Austin, March 26-28.

Texas Compost Summit participants from all parts of Texas and beyond shared exciting news about rapidly expanding markets. They learned that compost suppliers across the state are still not able to meet the peak demand during the spring planting season despite rapidly expanding production.

Composters discussed their success in several markets that have huge untapped potential. In the Panhandle and High Plains regions, row-crop farmers are buying large amounts of high-nitrogen feedlot manure compost made without bulking materials. Soil blends containing compost are making significant inroads into the urban bulk topsoil markets. Compost is also sold more and more in specialized horticultural formulations such as "rose mix." Demand for bagged and bulk compost from various feedstocks also continues to grow faster than production.

The conference highlighted several research and development projects offering increased opportunities for marketing compost. A study commissioned by the Texas Department of Transportation (TX DOT) found that compost performs very well as a substitute for erosion control blankets at a very competitive cost. TX DOT is currently developing specifications and may soon be purchasing compost to control erosion along some of the million miles of highway right-of-way in Texas. Similar specifications are likely to be adopted by other organizations.

A study in West Texas conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service found that even light applications of shredded yard

trimmings reduced erosion on highly erodible cropland. A Texas A&M study found that composted yard trimmings made a satisfactory component of potting soils for commercial greenhouse production.

Another promising agricultural market suggested by Nancy Roe of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service is fruit and vegetable producers, primarily located close to urban sources of compost and less exacting in its requirements for compost quality than greenhouse applications.

Various Texas composting facilities reported that they provide "markets" (or alternatives to disposal) not only for yard trimmings, sewage sludge and manure, but also for sawdust, pallets, commercial wood waste, gypsum board, supermarket produce

waste, food processing by-products, paunch manure, livestock mortalities, waste fluff from diaper manufacturing, and many other organic materials. A few facilities even recover out-of-date beverages and packaged foods from wholesalers and retailers (see Spotlight).

Private composters expressed some concern about the many Texas cities that give away mulch and compost, warning that this practice de-values compost. Several of them praised the city of Austin for selling its Dillo Dirt (sewage sludge compost) wholesale to commercial vendors instead of entering into retail competition.

The Summit participants selected a steering committee to establish a statewide composting group. Twelve committee members met April 15, chose the name "Composting Coalition of Texas," and named representatives to meet in early May with the Recycling Coalition of Texas to discuss a potential merger. For more information on composting, call the TNRCC at 512/239-6750.



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## Spotlight on: Silver Creek Materials

*Silver Creek Materials*, located in Fort Worth, is one of the largest commercial composting operations in Texas. It annually composts approximately 200,000 cubic yards of a variety of solid and liquid feedstocks, including wood scraps, manure, wine, eggs, meat, tomato paste, soft drinks, and grain. Previously 100 percent of the materials now being composted were landfilled. Silver Creek Materials is the first facility in Texas to recover out-of-date beverages and packaged foods - crushing them by the truck-load and draining the liquid into storage tanks. This liquid replaces the huge quantities of water typically pumped into the composting windrows to keep them moist. It also adds proteins and sugars to help speed the composting process. In 1997 the company expects to recycle 3 million gallons of organic liquids. In addition, the U.S. Postal Service selected Silver Creek to demonstrate composting of undeliverable bulk business mail.

The company takes material from both the public and private sectors and produces compost, which is blended into "topsoil" products for residential landscape construction and maintenance. Although the company is financially successful, Robert Dow says, "The rate of return cannot and should not be measured simply in terms of dollars. It must include a much broader definition which encompasses our children's and the environment's future. To what avail are forty fortunes without a green meadow upon which to sit?" For more information contact company President Robert Dow at (817)246-2426.

## ETC.

**Southeast Paper Manufacturing Co.** of Dublin, Georgia may decide in June on investing \$325 million to build a newsprint paper mill in the South. The top three potential sites are Shreveport, La.; Helena, Ark.; and Memphis, Tenn. The facility is expected to produce about 200,000 short tons of recycled newsprint each year and employ more than one hundred people.

## Texas Market Prices

(for the week of April 15, 1997)

| Material |                     | Processor Price    | End-User Price     |
|----------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Aluminum | UBC (cans)          | \$0.25 - 0.44/lb — | \$0.55 - 0.60/lb — |
| Glass    | Flint               | 0 - 20/ton —       | 50 - 57/ton —      |
|          | Amber               | 0 - 15/ton —       | 40 - 59/ton —      |
|          | Green               | 0/ton —            | 15/ton —           |
| Paper    | OCC                 | 40 - 50/ton ↓      | 65 - 80/ton ↓      |
|          | ONP #8              | 0 - 10/ton —       | 10 - 30/ton —      |
|          | White Ledger        | 20 - 80/ton —      | 100 - 140/ton ↓    |
|          | Mixed Paper         | 0 - 10/ton —       | 5 - 15/ton —       |
|          | Mixed Office Ledger | 10 - 20/ton —      | 40 - 65/ton ↓      |
|          | Computer Print-out  | 100 - 150/ton —    | 200 - 210/ton —    |
| Plastic  | PET (mixed colors)  | 0 —                | 0.04 - 0.05/lb ↓   |
|          | HDPE (natural)      | 0 —                | 0.20 - 0.21/lb ↑   |
|          | HDPE (mixed colors) | 0 —                | 0.06 - 0.13/lb —   |
| Steel    | Steel Cans          | 38/ton —           | 75/ton ↓           |

*The prices listed above are compiled by the TNRCC Recycling Market Development Program and are for reference only. These prices are not firm quotes. TNRCC obtained pricing information from buyers within each category and developed a pricing range. "Processors" include dealers, brokers, scrap yards and collection centers; whereas, "end-users" include mills and plants. Processor prices are for delivered material in metropolitan areas of the state and do not reflect the value of any collection services. End-user prices, except for glass, are for baled material in truckload quantity, f.o.b. seller's dock. The difference between processor and end-user prices is indicative of the value added by separating, baling or otherwise preparing materials to meet end-market specifications. Actual prices paid by end-users will depend on quality, quantity and transportation requirements. Arrows indicate direction of change from previous month.*

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